



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Ukraine

As delivered by Deputy Representative Douglas Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 26, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Radio Dovira has been the principal partner of Radio Liberty's Ukrainian Service for five years. The relationship has been close and productive until last week when Radio Dovira's new management informed Radio Liberty that it would stop carrying the service as of February 17, because it was not compatible with the station's new format.

We understand that Radio Dovira has come under very strong political pressure in the past to drop Radio Liberty's Ukrainian Service. The former management of Radio Dovira stood firmly against this pressure but, it now appears that for political reasons the new management is trying to take Radio Liberty off the air under the guise of format changes.

The United States deeply regrets this decision, because it will narrow the range of news and information available to Ukrainians. This decision is all the more disturbing because it was made in an election year in Ukraine, when the need for news and information from a variety of independent sources is key to ensuring that the Ukrainian public can make informed decisions about those they are being asked to elect.

Ukraine has expressed its desire to join Euro-Atlantic institutions and the U.S. supports this goal. These institutions are premised, however, on Western democratic values, including respect for an independent media and the conduct of free and fair elections. The international community, including the OSCE's Office of the Project Coordinator and ODIHR, civil society, and independent media all have a significant role to play in assisting Ukraine to realize its objectives. To this end, we urge Ukrainian authorities to restore Radio Liberty's ability to broadcast in Ukraine.